United Nations A/62/235

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 November 2007

Original: English

Sixty-second session

Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the sixty-second session

Commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor)

Letter dated 24 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions of my Government and in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-second session of the Assembly of an additional item entitled "Commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor)", with subsequent consideration of the item directly at a plenary meeting of the Assembly.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum and a joint statement on the seventieth anniversary of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor) of 7 November 2003 are attached herewith (see annexes).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Yuriy **Sergeyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations

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Annex I to the letter dated 24 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine addressed to the Secretary-General

Explanatory memorandum

Between 1932 and 1933, millions of Ukrainians died in what has become known as the Great Famine (Holodomor). Unlike most such catastrophes, the famine was caused not by natural disaster but by actions of the totalitarian regime.

The Holodomor of 1932-1933 ranks among the worst cases of State's inhumanity towards its own citizens, and is perhaps the most extreme example of the use of food as a weapon.

The famine resulted from Joseph Stalin's policy against the Ukrainian peasantry.

As early as the fall of 1931, the first shadows of famine fell upon Ukrainian villages and cities. People began to die by thousands, despite reports of a record harvest in 1932. Peasants who attempted to hide grain or other foodstuffs in their homes were deported or executed. Withholding or stealing grain, considered State property, became a crime punishable by death. Heavily guarded grain silos, filled to capacity, lay just within reach of the starving peasants, yet were inaccessible to them. Instead, the grain was dumped on Western markets and the proceeds used to finance Stalin's industrialization plans for the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Government rejected all offers of external aid, insisting that the famine was a slanderous fabrication by enemies of the Soviet Union. The secretive Soviet regime did not allow foreigners to visit the countryside. A number of foreign journalists who did learn of the famine avoided referring to it because of Government pressure, indifference or personal reasons.

Though the tragedy was covered up, the truth surrounding the events has been documented by witnesses and survivors, as well as in investigative works like Robert Conquest's *Harvest of Despair*, and the report of the United States Congressional Commission on the Ukraine Famine, established in 1983.

Truth about the horrific scope of Holodomor began to spread through the international community when Ukraine regained independence in 1991. Today, the catastrophic repercussions of that most disturbing episode in the history of the Ukrainian nation are being studied and documented for future generations.

Today, Ukrainian and world historians have collected incontestable evidence suggesting that millions of people in the Soviet Ukraine died as a result of the systematic confiscation of grain and livestock. The most recent declassification of the archives of the former KGB has brought to light secret orders of Stalin and his associates, which aimed to wipe out Ukraine's individual landowners and to force remaining peasants to give up their land and join collective farms.

On 28 November 2006, the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine passed a bill, condemning the artificially made 1932-1933 Great Famine (Holodomor) in Ukraine.

Signing the bill into law, the President of Ukraine, Victor Yushchenko, welcomed the historic decision by Ukrainian lawmakers as one that aimed at restoring Ukraine's national dignity and historical justice, and appealed for worldwide support for Ukraine's efforts to honour the victims who perished during the famine.

In 2003, a milestone joint statement on the seventieth anniversary of the Holodomor, supported by one third of United Nations membership, was issued as a document of the General Assembly. In the statement, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, Holodomor was officially recognized as the national tragedy of the Ukrainian people, caused by the cruel actions and policies of the totalitarian regime.

To date, more than a dozen foreign parliaments have adopted decisions to honour the victims of the tragedy and to condemn the actions of Stalin's regime. We very much value those important signs of compassion and support.

And, yet, until now, the hideous crime of the Holodomor is still awaiting adequate international recognition.

We do sincerely hope that the United Nations, as the collective voice of the international community, called to safeguard universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, will say its authoritative word about the truth of the horrendous disaster and denounce it by adopting a relevant resolution on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Holodomor.

Our intention is not to settle scores with the past by putting blame on any of the contemporary States. Our purpose is to restore the dignity and honour the memory of the millions of our compatriots who were outrageously deprived of their sacred lives.

It is important to remember the past in order to learn from it and to avoid repeating it. We must use that knowledge to strengthen the effectiveness of the rule of law all over the world.

We are confident that by exposing violations of human rights, preserving historical records and restoring the dignity of victims through acknowledgement of their suffering, the United Nations will guide future generations and help them to avoid similar catastrophes.

Annex II to the letter dated 24 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine addressed to the Secretary-General

Joint statement by the delegations of Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Egypt, Georgia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nauru, Pakistan, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America on the seventieth anniversary of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor)*

In the former Soviet Union millions of men, women and children fell victims to the cruel actions and policies of the totalitarian regime. The Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor), which took from 7 million to 10 million innocent lives and became a national tragedy for the Ukrainian people. In this regard we note activities in observance of the seventieth anniversary of this Famine, in particular organized by the Government of Ukraine.

Honouring the seventieth anniversary of the Ukrainian tragedy, we also commemorate the memory of millions of Russians, Kazakhs and representatives of other nationalities who died of starvation in the Volga River region, Northern Caucasus, Kazakhstan and in other parts of the former Soviet Union, as a result of civil war and forced collectivization, leaving deep scars in the consciousness of future generations.

Expressing sympathy to the victims of the Great Famine, we call upon all Member States, the United Nations and its special agencies, international and regional organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations, foundations and associations to pay tribute to the memory of those who perished during that tragic period of history.

Recognizing the importance of raising public awareness on the tragic events in the history of mankind for their prevention in future, we deplore the acts and policies that brought about mass starvation and death of millions of people. We do not want to settle scores with the past, it could not be changed, but we are convinced that exposing violations of human rights, preserving historical records and restoring the dignity of victims through acknowledgement of their suffering, will guide future societies and help to avoid similar catastrophes in the future. We need that as many people as possible learn about this tragedy and consider that this knowledge will strengthen effectiveness of the rule of law and enhance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

* Previously issued in A/C.3/58/9.